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File No. 9110023

WORLD TRADE CENTER TASK FORCE INTERVIEW

LT. ROBERT DORRITIE

Interview Date: October 9, 2001

Transcribed by Maureen McCormick No.

R DORRITIE

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MR. MURAD: 1400 hours, and I am

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Murray Murad.

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MR. CONDARI: I'm George Condari, the

5

Fire Department of New York City.

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LIEUTENANT DORRITIE: I'm Lieutenant

7

Robert Doherty, assigned to Engine 53 of

8

Battalion 10, the New York City Fire

9

Department.

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Q. We are currently at the location of

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Engine 53. This is regarding the events that

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took place on September 11, 2001.

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Lieutenant, would you like to give us

14

an account of that tragic day?

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A. We were actually sitting in the

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kitchen in the morning, and of course the first

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plane had hit already, we were watching it, and

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then at that moment, you know, the fifth alarm --

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first it went to a second alarm, third alarm, and

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then quick fifth alarm, and I said, "Well, okay,

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boys. We better get ready. We are going to get

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going," and then we were kind of surprised that

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we didn't go on the first fifth alarm, but when

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the second plane hit, we were actually ready to

25

go, and it came in at 9:08, I believe, and when

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2 we were on the rig, and we cut across the park
3 and went up 102nd Street here, cut across the
4 park, through the park, over to 11th Avenue.

5 By that time, they had already closed
6 down 11th Avenue, and we flew all the way down
7 there. The police had closed the whole place
8 down, and we flew all the way down there.

9 So we were down there in nine minutes,
10 nine or ten minutes, so we really got down there
11 pretty fast. We got out of the rig. I told them
12 to park it over to the side. There were a couple
13 of other rigs in the middle of West Street.

14 Q. You can use the map and --

15 A. Yeah, we were above the pedestrian
16 bridge, but over here, right? We were parked
17 over here, but you couldn't get down any further,
18 because there were two rigs here.

19 Q. So you parked by Thames?

20 A. Yes, we were parked over here
21 somewhere, I guess, and because we were before
22 Liberty Street.

23 Q. Do you happen to remember the rigs
24 that were there by chance?

25 A. No. So what happened was we found the

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2 command post at -- I'm sorry. We are over here.
3 I'm sorry. Actually, it was parked at Barclay
4 and Vesey, over here Barclay and Vesey. There
5 were two rigs parked here. We got out. The
6 chauffeur said, "Well, there is no use -- Louis
7 Giacone, he said to me, "There is no sense me
8 staying here. Let me go with you guys."

9 I said, "Of course, come on. Let's
10 go." So we actually trotted over to near the
11 pedestrian bridge where we saw people. You know,
12 they were jumping out. People were jumping out.
13 It was amazing that -- I couldn't believe that
14 people were jumping.

15 My first thoughts were -- when I saw
16 this was I saw this in -- you saw it on film down
17 in South America where you see these people -- I
18 said to myself it could never happen here in New
19 York City, because of all the fire protection
20 that we have, the sprinklers and everything else
21 like this. It would never happen here.

22 To see this happening, it was beyond
23 belief, you know.

24 Q. You got concerned about the people
25 jumping?

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2 A. Yes, and also concerned about crossing
3 underneath the bridge as far as getting hit with
4 people. It was a young fellow there, who was
5 kind of like looking up all the time, and I said,
6 "You know, maybe get some relief for yourself,
7 because you can't stay here all the time, you
8 know."

9 So we walked across, and we found the
10 command post located directly across the street
11 from the north tower, the Tower No. 1, and it was
12 on No. 2 World Trade -- I'm sorry. World
13 Financial Center, and over here there is a
14 parking garage underneath, and so they had the
15 command center set up for them on that sidewalk
16 directly across the street from -- there is a
17 canopy here. It was almost directly across the
18 street.

19 Q. Okay. So was there communication
20 between -- when you arrived at the scene, did you
21 have radio communications with --

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. We had all kinds of radio
25 communications. In fact, they kept switching

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2 over to Channel 5.

3 Q. What channel were you initially on?

4 A. 1.

5 Q. 1?

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. And then you were told to switch to --

8 A. No, I switched to Channel 5 just to
9 monitor what was going on, you know. I had the
10 other guys still on Channel 1, but I wanted to
11 see what was going on.

12 Q. So basically Channel 1?

13 A. Yeah, so I was pretty excited at that
14 time, and I said -- you know, I ran ever over
15 to -- it was a captain there. I forget his
16 name. Louis knows his name, but he ordered me to
17 move the two rigs that were blocking West Street,
18 so we ran back. We moved the two rigs. We came
19 back again.

20 Q. Where did you move them to?

21 A. We just pushed -- parked them over to
22 the side.

23 Q. Between West and Broadway then?

24 A. So now ambulances could come down. He
25 was right. You know, we should have moved the

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2 rigs. It was -- there were blocking the streets,
3 so we moved the rigs, and I ran back there.

4 Now I got pretty excited, and I said,
5 you know, "Come on, there's people jumping.
6 What's my assignment?" You know, and they
7 assigned us to No. 2 World Trade Center, the
8 south tower, so I turned around to get my guys,
9 and there was Mychal Judge giving absolution to
10 about five or six guys, and at that time a lady
11 in a blue dress came down, you know.

12 They were jumping a long time, and
13 there was guys walking underneath the canopy.
14 You felt you were safe underneath the canopy if
15 you walked in, I guess, because guys were running
16 over underneath the canopy and they'd go in, but
17 she came down, and she came down and she went
18 through the skylight and she hit this guy with
19 216, and she crushed him, so I think Father Judge
20 saw that, and I stopped him on the way, you know,
21 I said, you know, "You give absolution to these
22 guys, but what about me, father?" And then what
23 he did was, he really calmed me. He said, "It
24 includes everybody. It includes everybody."

25 So it was -- you know, so I went back

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2 to the command post, and said, "Okay, guys let's
3 get our stuff," started to walk across the street
4 towards the south tower, and that's when it
5 collapsed, so we ran -- I ran back and took
6 everybody, my guys, to the parking lot.

7 Q. What did you feel before it started
8 collapsing?

9 A. Right. I said to myself when I looked
10 up -- you know, looking at it, actually one of
11 the guys, about secondary explosion, you gotta
12 watch the secondary explosions, second devices,
13 things like that, be careful of that, and when it
14 went -- it looked like it went off like a
15 secondary explosion went off, and I said -- I
16 actually said to myself, wow, this is actually
17 pretty good, because it's out of the way.

18 The secondary device is out of the
19 way. Hopefully nobody is hurt there, but at
20 least we don't have to worry about a secondary
21 explosion, but at that time then we saw the
22 building collapse, push down on itself. I
23 couldn't believe it.

24 So we started running into the parking
25 garage. That's the last I saw. The building

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2 basically -- you know, I thought it was going to
3 be a little bit of a couple of floors coming down
4 or something else like that, but never
5 realized -- found our way out the back, and then
6 couple of guys we got, you know, we tried to
7 force some doors out under the parking garage,
8 found my way back and got a search line going,
9 and found my way back into this parking garage,
10 came back through it, and I was with my
11 flashlight the whole time because I wanted to see
12 if there was anybody out here that I could help,
13 you know, and I had my guys back in here on this
14 area.

15 Q. All your guys were accounted for the
16 whole time?

17 A. Yes, yeah.

18 Q. You were all together?

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. Still in the command post at that
21 time?

22 A. I didn't see him. When I came back, I
23 saw Sal, Chief Cassano, and I actually didn't
24 know I was outside. I was walking, you know,
25 through the garage thinking it was dark, and then

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2 I hit that -- there is a yellow stanchion
3 outside, and I walked into that.

4 What the hell is this? And I walked
5 out and I looked up, and it was dark. It was
6 like --

7 Q. I know.

8 A. You know, right, exactly.

9 Q. I was there.

10 A. You know, and I thought it was very
11 quiet, and I saw Cassano there, and I'm pretty
12 sure I saw Chief Ganci here on the corner. He
13 was trying to get the command post back together
14 or something else.

15 There was another chief he was talking
16 to at that time, and then he went -- he got up.
17 As soon as it started to get light out, as it
18 started to lighten up, he must have saw somebody
19 over here.

20 Q. Who was that?

21 A. Ganci, and he took off that way. He
22 went from here, he went this way.

23 Q. So he went --

24 A. He went --

25 Q. -- across West Street?

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2 A. Out and down south. He went across
3 West Street and down south, yeah, right, east and
4 then south.

5 I lost sight of him after he left
6 there, but Cassano was there, and there was a few
7 other fellows that came out of this parking
8 garage, and everybody was concerned which way to
9 go, and at that time I was saying this tower is
10 coming down, you know. We got to get out of
11 here, and I didn't want to go back underneath the
12 pedestrian bridge, so I said there is a way out
13 of here, we got a search line going. Let's get
14 everybody out of here, right? So everybody
15 started walking this way. When I got back in the
16 back here, I just -- you know, it was a bunch of
17 guys here, and I kind of directed them around
18 Water Street.

19 Q. The back of the financial center?

20 A. Right, back across. There is a park
21 here, equivalent, right behind Merrill Lynch. I
22 said we will wind up over here on Vesey and
23 North.

24 Q. North End Street?

25 A. Yes, North End Street, right, so

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2 everybody started walking across this way, and as
3 guys came out, I was directing them that way, and
4 I think me, Eddie Catcher and the two probies
5 were over here.

6 Q. Do you know the names?

7 A. Danny Scofield and Michael Catalano.
8 They wound up over here. I had Eddie Catcher
9 with me, and Louie Giacone and myself back
10 here, so it started -- there was stragglers
11 coming out of the building, and I said, "Okay,
12 I'm going to go back in, and see what I could do
13 for the guys inside again," and Louis said, "No,
14 I'll go."

15 He insisted on going, so he went back
16 through the building, and then I said, "Eddie, we
17 got to get out of here, because this building is
18 going to go." You could see No. 2. We were
19 looking at it again.

20 Then it went down, and I fell behind
21 the park -- there's park benches over here, and a
22 little alcove, and when they went down, it was --
23 you know, you could see it coming at you, as if
24 the dark came down at you, you know, that type of
25 thing, you know, and at that time, I had already

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2 in the back of my head where I was going to go if
3 this building went, and I figured it would be
4 safe, because I was far enough away from it, but
5 I didn't realize that it was going to be that
6 bad. It was worse for me.

7 The second one was actually worse for
8 me than the first one, even though I was in the
9 parking garage. It seemed to be a lot less
10 debris and, you know, a lot less smoke and things
11 like that were in the parking garage, plus I
12 guess it was over here, it was a lot less, but
13 when this building came down, I was behind the
14 bench and then you hear like a wind, right?

15 You know, like a wind comes at you,
16 and you hear -- first you hear this, you know,
17 dust and dirt, and then the big stuff starts
18 coming, and mostly what I found out later was the
19 stainless steel -- this is from the front of the
20 building -- landed all around me, and so I got
21 up. Eddie Catcher, he jumped on this side of the
22 bench.

23 I jumped on this side of the bench,
24 and basically we got ourselves together, and I
25 said I got to go get Louis now, because he's in

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2 the building, Louis Giacone, and he had been in
3 there when the building went down. He was
4 actually in the Winter Garden building, and he
5 was up -- there is a second floor up over here,
6 and when it went down, you know, this part of the
7 building is gone now, right?

8 When it went down, it actually blew
9 him this way, and when he got up, he --you know,
10 there was other people. Luckily, he had his
11 mask. There were other guys that did not have
12 their mask. He actually led six or seven people
13 out of that building there, and when he came out,
14 I saw him.

15 I says, "Okay, you know, you got
16 everybody? Let's get back." When we came back,
17 we were looking for our rig over here on West
18 Street again, and we couldn't find it, you know.
19 Somebody had moved it in between the collapses
20 and parked it over on the end of Vesey and North
21 End over here, and it had -- it was hooking up to
22 Marine 9, so they were using it as a supply to a
23 power line on West Street, and --

24 Q. Put down here final resting Engine 53,
25 and this was the original point. Put a line

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2 across. It was moved by?

3 A. I don't know who it was moving it.

4 Q. Okay, but it was moved, right?

5 When you said there were stragglers,
6 firefighters, or civilians or both?

7 A. Both.

8 Q. And were you able to identify any of
9 the other firefighters who were not in your
10 company or under your command?11 A. No, we had a couple of guys that came
12 around when I was back here that came out of this
13 building. Yakamovitch, he's -- I don't know if
14 you know him. He came out of this building, and
15 he walked around this way. (Inaudible) is that
16 five? I got to go.17 Q. We'll just -- okay. At this time the
18 engine is getting an assignment. We'll
19 continue.

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